

Amendments to the Claims

Please replace all prior versions and listings of claims with the following listing of claims.

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. ***(Canceled)***

2. ***(New)*** An apparatus for monitored and filtered communication in a shared learning environment, the shared learning environment including a plurality of validated groups that communicate among one another, each of the plurality of validated groups comprising at least one participant and an administrator, the apparatus comprising:

 a central data storage center that receives group description data associated with a candidate group and stores the group description data;

 a first filter that validates the group description data whereupon the associated candidate group is deemed acceptable for participation in the shared learning environment, wherein the candidate group associated with the validated group description data thereby becomes one of the plurality of validated groups;

 a search engine that searches for another of the plurality of validated groups with which to communicate in the shared learning environment on behalf of an administrator of the one of the plurality of validated groups; and

 a second filter that monitors communications between the plurality of validated groups, the second filter including at least a flagging filter that flags communications between participants in validated groups for further inspection based on content of said communications.

3. **(New)** The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the candidate group comprises a classroom and the at least one participant comprises at least one student, and wherein the group description data includes one or more of an identity of the administrator associated with the group, a textual description of the classroom, an average age of the at least one student, one or more languages spoken by the at least one student, the number of students comprising the at least one student, and a description of the interests of the at least one student.

4. **(New)** The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the group description data includes identification information regarding the administrator associated with the candidate group, and wherein the first filter validates an identity of the administrator associated with the candidate group.

5. **(New)** The apparatus of claim 4, wherein validation of the identity of the administrator includes ensuring that the administrator is authorized to represent the participants in the candidate group.

6. **(New)** The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the flagging filter includes one or more filtering levels at which communications between participants are filtered, and wherein each participant in a validated group is associated with a participant account, the participant account identifying one of the filtering levels at which the flagging filter flags communications associated with a participant associated with the participant account.

7. **(New)** The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the administrator for each validated group sets the filtering level for each participant account.

8. (New) The apparatus of claim 2, wherein some or all of the group description data is used to create a profile having one or more group characteristics associated with each of the validated groups, wherein the search engine searches for another of the plurality of validated groups by one or more of the one or more group characteristics.

9. (New) The apparatus of claim 2, further comprising a master word list associated with the flagging filter, wherein the flagging filter scans all communications between participants of validated groups and flags communications that include words on the master word list.

10. (New) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein all flagged communications are sent to administrators associated with the groups of the communicating participants for review prior to the flagged communications reaching their destination.

11. (New) The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the communications are electronic mail messages and the destination is an inbox of a participant.

12. (New) The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the communications are posts to a message board and the destination is the message board.

13. (New) The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the flagging filter scans communications between participants of validated groups and flags communications that include attachments, wherein all flagged communications are sent to administrators associated with the groups of the communicating participants for review of the attachments prior to the flagged communications reaching their destination.

14. (New) The apparatus of claim 2, further comprising a log of all communications received by a participant.

15. **(New)** A method for providing monitored and filtered communication in a shared learning environment, the shared learning environment including a plurality of validated groups that communicate among one another, each of the plurality of validated groups comprising at least one participant and an administrator, the method comprising:

receiving group description data from an administrator of a candidate group;

validating, at a first filter, the group description data, whereupon the associated candidate group thereby becomes one of the plurality of validated groups;

searching for another of the plurality of validated groups with which to communicate in the shared learning environment, on behalf of an administrator of the one of the plurality of validated groups; and

monitoring, at a second filter, communications between the plurality of validated groups, the second filter including at least a flagging filter that flags communications between participants in validated groups for further inspection based on content of said communications.

16. **(New)** The method of claim 15, wherein the candidate group comprises a classroom and the at least one participant comprises at least one student, and wherein the group description data includes one or more of an identity of the administrator associated with the group, a textual description of the classroom, average age of the at least one student, one or more languages spoken by the at least one student, the number of students comprising the at least one student, and a description of the interests of the at least one student.

17. **(New)** The method of claim 15, wherein the group description data includes identification information regarding an administrator associated with the candidate group, and wherein validating the received group description data further comprises validating an identity of the administrator associated with the candidate group.

18. **(New)** The method of claim 17, wherein validating of the identity of the administrator includes ensuring that the administrator is authorized to represent the participants in the candidate group.

19. **(New)** The method of claim 15, wherein the flagging filter includes one or more filtering levels at which communications between participants are filtered, and wherein each participant in a validated group is associated with a participant account, the participant account identifying one of the filtering levels at which the flagging filter flags communications associated with a participant associated with the participant account.

20. **(New)** The method of claim 19, wherein the administrator for each validated group sets the filtering level for each participant account.

21. **(New)** The method of claim 15, wherein validating the received group description data further comprises, for each validated group, creating a profile having one or more group characteristics using some or all of the group description data for that group, and wherein searching for another of the plurality of validated groups further comprises searching for another of the plurality of validated groups by one or more of the one or more group characteristics.

22. **(New)** The method of claim 15, further comprising scanning, at the flagging filter, communications between participants of validated groups and flagging communications that include words on a master word list associated with the flagging filter.

23. **(New)** The method of claim 22, further comprising sending all flagged communications to administrators associated with the groups of the communicating participants for review prior to the flagged communications reaching their destination.

24. **(New)** The method of claim 23, wherein the communications are electronic mail messages and the destination is an inbox of a participant.

25. **(New)** The method of claim 23, wherein the communications are posts to a message board and the destination is the message board.

26. **(New)** The method of claim 15, wherein monitoring communications between the plurality of validated groups further comprising:
scanning, at the flagging filter, communications between participants of validated groups;
flagging communications that include attachments; and
sending all flagged communications to administrators associated with the groups of the communicating participants for review of the attachments prior to the flagged communications reaching their destination.

27. **(New)** The method of claim 15, further comprising maintaining a log of all communications received by a participant.